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2nd World Breastfeeding Conference 14 December 2016, Symposium 7:

The role of Civil Society in tackling societal and cultural barriers to exclusive breastfeeding

(a). Session Convenor: Chantell Witten (North West University) & Co-convenor: Dr Coenie Louw (Gateway Health Institute).

(b). Method of presentation(s); Keynote presentations followed by structured facilitated discussion points

Moderator(s) for the session: Ms Mia Malan (Director and Editor -Bhekisisa: M&G Centre for Health Journalism)

(c). Proposed Speakers;

- i. Welcome and introduction from SACSoWACH Chair: Sue Jones (Save the Children) (5mins)
- ii. Word from SACSoWACH Patron: Dr Tshepo Motsepe (5mins)
- iii. Proposed speakers:
 - a. Esmé Hough, La Leche League (LLL) Leader since 1986, Professional Liaison for LLL/South Africa and Chair-Elect for The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE). (10mins)
 - b. Dr Coenie Louw, co-founder of Da Vinci Foundation, South African chapter of African Human Rights Coalition and Gateway Health Institute, South Africa. Dr Louw represents civil society on the local organizing committee for the 2nd World Breastfeeding Conference to be co-hosted by IBFAN and the South African National Department of Health. (10mins)
 - c. Dr Kelebogile Setiloane, Associate Professor of Nutrition, University of Delaware. (10mins)

(d). Focal/contact person to work closely with the secretariat: Sue Jones (SJones@savethechildren.org.za)

Purpose: To explore solutions for the societal and cultural barriers and to strengthen (i.e. the solutions) in respect to the role of CSOs and in support of the National Department of Health (NDOH) Breastfeeding Strategy

The technical content: Despite strong scientific evidence and the global and national calls to action, breastfeeding has not been embraced and supported by the general public in South Africa. Experts agree that while breastfeeding policies are sound and in place, the translation and implementation of these policies are weak across the health system including NGOs and CBOs engaged in child health and development. South Africa has had long-standing civil society groups working in breastfeeding such as the Le Leche League (LLL) and the Breastfeeding Association of South Africa. But unlike the strong history of civil action in health with victories in ARV treatment and most recently the legislation of reduction of salt and the taxation of sugar-sweetened beverages, civil society action on improving breastfeeding rates has not shown the same success. With the newly formed coalition, the South African Civil Society for Women, Adolescent and Child Health (SACSoWACH), lessons from civil society actions can be applied to the improvement of breastfeeding practices in South Africa.

The workshop will be an opportunity to build on previous activities such as the round table on breastfeeding held during National Breastfeeding Awareness Month in August 2016 and the workshop session held during the World Nutrition Conference in September 2016. SACSoWACH will share and gather insights from civil society groups on on-going breastfeeding programmes and community-based best practices to promote and support breastfeeding mothers and infants. This will give SACSoWACH an opportunity to engage local and international NGOs/CBOs in best practices and benchmarking efforts to develop a community led action plan to promote and support breastfeeding through a network of organizations and entities.

Target audience: civil society organizations engaged in women, maternal and child health and development programmes.

Means of engagement: Interactive presentations to stimulate discussion and debate. Participants will be engaged in group discussions to distil breastfeeding promotion advocacy strategies and promotion activities. Groups will provide feedback using a variety of formats like role-play, flipcharts, and presentations.

Motivation:

- (i) **Technical merit:** Breastfeeding is the undisputed feeding option for the optimal growth and development of young children. For the past two decades, breastfeeding practices in South Africa have been suboptimal and further complicated by the HIV epidemic. Despite the significant progress and merits South Africa has yielded in health child such as the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT), universal immunization and reduction in under 5 mortality rates, South Africa is still challenged with suboptimal breastfeeding rates, especially exclusive breastfeeding rates.
- (ii) **Relevance to the topics:** Without the improvement of breastfeeding practices South Africa will fail to reach the desired SDG targets related to nutrition and especially child mortality. South Africa's Maternal, Newborn, Child and Women's Health and Nutrition Strategy, 2012-2016 has a target of 75% exclusive breastfeeding. Without the active

engagement of civil society to address, the socio-cultural context breastfeeding mothers are challenged with; these targets will remain out of reach.

(iii) Engagement of diverse contributors: The presenting team includes skilled and experienced nutrition and child rights advocates engaged in breastfeeding programmes. The team represents NGOs, academia, the government, and the UN. The team collectively brings local and international experience.

(iv) Active involvement of the audience: This is an interactive workshop using a blended format with presentations and hands-on individual and group activities to discuss innovate and plan a co-ordinated civil society response to the NDoH efforts to improve breastfeeding practices in South Africa.

(v) Tangible outcomes: A database of workshop participants will be established for follow up and continued liaison. Participants will contribute to a community-led breastfeeding action plan to engage communities and initiate a dialogue and action to improve the breastfeeding culture in South Africa over the period 2017/2018.

Disclosure of conflict of interest:

All the contributors to this workshop have no conflict of interest to declare. We participate as representatives of our respective institutions and affiliations. The design of the workshop is a collective effort with inputs from the individuals involved. Collectively and individually, we declare to work for and in the interest of women and children in South Africa.
